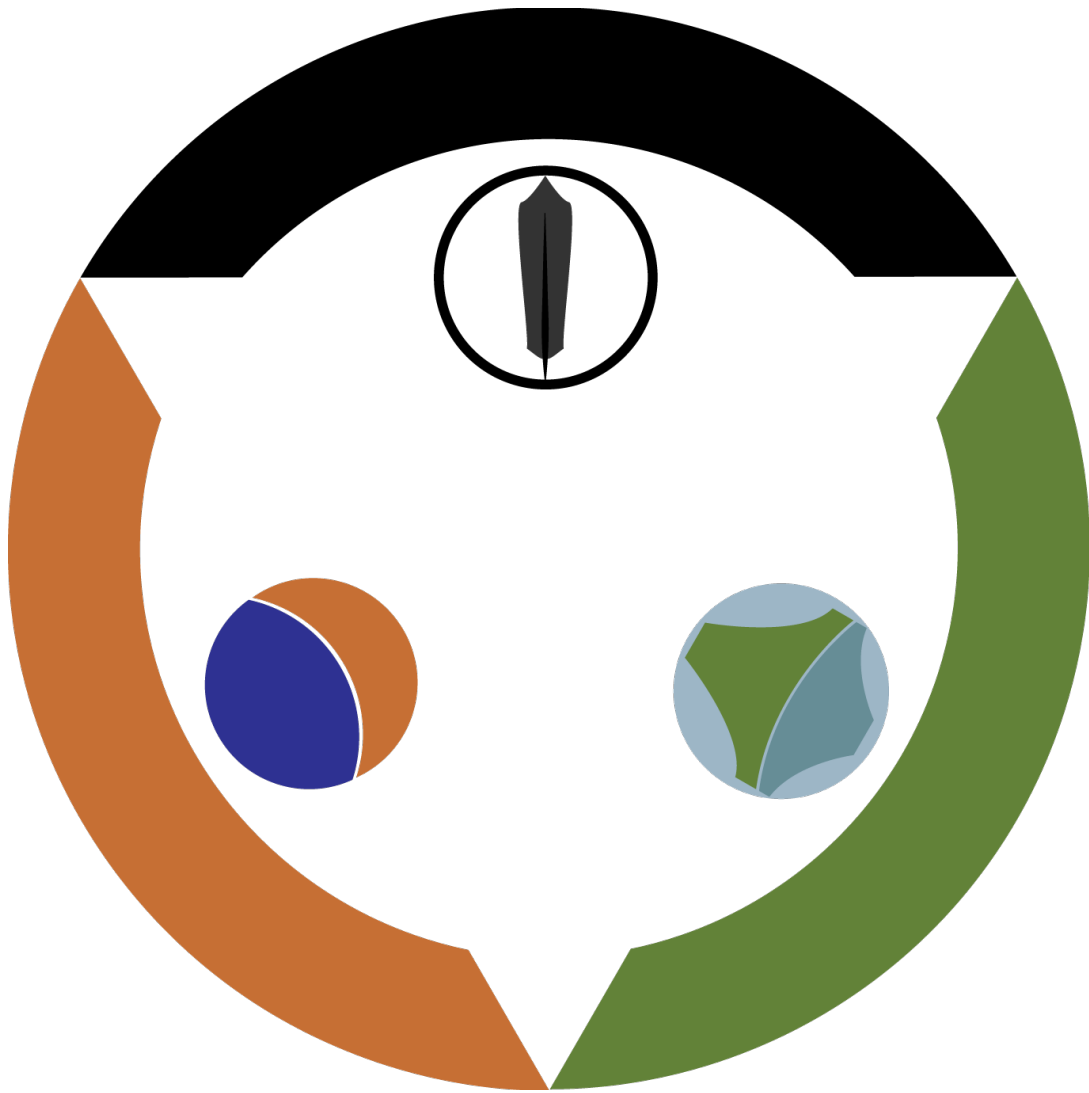


Governance in Pontau



**The Clergy and Polity of the
Theocratic Federation of Sutzian
Kingdoms**

Introduction

DATING

Dates in this document follow the standard Sutzian practice of counting from the birth of Sutzi, though for the sake of clarity, Pre-Sutzi dates count backwards from his birth, rather than in the somewhat baroque Sutzian system of dividing time into periods of varying length based on the length of the lives of mythical demigods and heroes in an near arbitrary order. The abbreviations PS and AS will be used to denote Pre-Sutzi and After-Sutzi respectively.



Historical Context

Sutzian monastic scholars divided contemporary (i.e. post-heroic) history into 3 distinct periods: The Age of Shamans, The Age of Sutzi, and The Age of Grand Abbots. Although this distinction is somewhat arbitrary, it does provide a fairly useful framework for discussing the history of Pontau.

The Age of Shamans is considered the entire period from the end of the Age of Hero's, an almost wholly mythical time in which all epic Pontau legends are set, to the birth of Sutzi, the deified founder of Sutzianism. It is characterised by monastic scholars as having animistic belief systems, smaller political units with less formal interactions and a greater degree of isolation between regions. Although the period is considered barbaric and violent, clergy also attribute a greater power to people from the Shamanic Age, with historical figures reported to live well beyond 100 years and possessing all manner of supernatural powers. These features, along with the less than clear pre-Sutzian dating system, make drawing a boundary between the Heroic and Shamanic age nearly impossible.

Of course the reality of The Shamanic Age is a little more complex. Although in the period leading up to the birth of Sutzi, north-western regions were fairly sparsely populated and the people who lived there were tribal or semi-nomadic, southern and eastern regions had already coalesced into city states and kingdoms. The region into which Sutzi would be born was forming into a proto-empire, and much of the groundwork for the prodigious spread of Sutzianism was already laid, with more and more kingdoms willingly or by force aggregating with the Empire. A general strengthening of trade routes and the emergence of a merchant class, and thus wider economic interaction, also contributed greatly to Sutzianism's success.

In 9 PS the 17 year old Do rose to the throne, replacing his brother Ten. Do's second son and Ten's namesake, Tenne was born seven years later*. Tenne would ascend to the throne at 25, after the death of both his father and elder brother, giving rise to the Trinity of Younger Brothers metaphor often used to refer to Do, Tenne and Sutzi, all of whom were second sons.

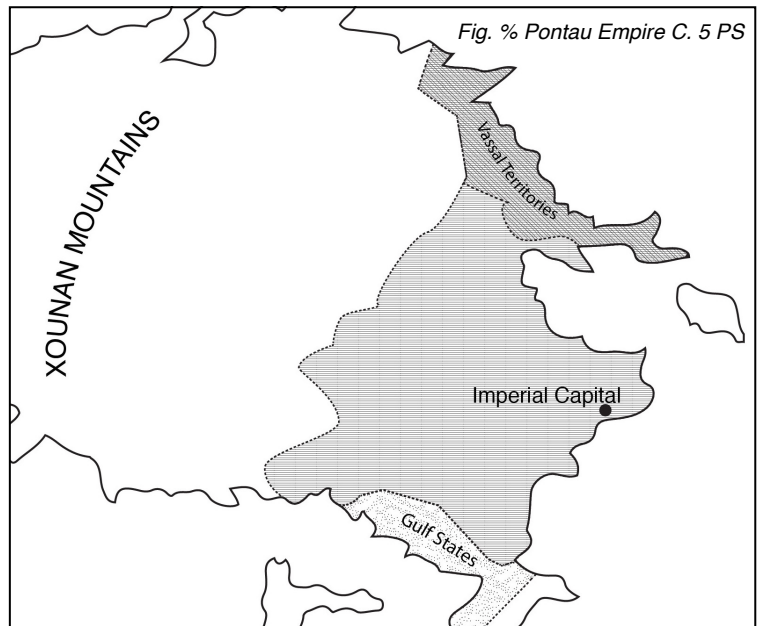
Also important for the later governance of the Federation, a bureaucratic body had begun to form around the emperors that would later develop into the bureaucratic wing of the Sutzian clergy. In the period directly before and during Sutzi's life, this body was concerned chiefly with the managing of taxes and communication in the empire, and with the management of political and military figures. It is this latter power that positioned the bureaucracy to gain control of the Monastic Guard in later years.

Around the birth of Sutzi, the Empire stretched from eastern to central Pontau. North western territories laid mostly untouched and extensive, if sporadic wars were being fought with city states along the south eastern gulf coast. North eastern warlords were mostly vassals of the Emperor, free of tax duties, but frequently paying tribute and providing gifts in the form of manpower or foodstuffs.

Though it is beyond the scope of this essay to describe Sutzi or the tenets of his religion in any great detail, a brief explanation of how the religious body Sutzi left behind evolved into the chief governing body in the Federation bares discussion.

* Folklore has it that Tenne and Sutzi were born at precisely the same time, though official records disagree.

During his life, Sutzi, with the aid of Emperor Tenne, began the development of a monastic body based on a code derived from the chief tenets of his philosophy, and structured something like the bureaucratic offices. By the time he had reached old age, there were Sutzian monasteries in all major cities, often created from repurposed bureaucratic or military buildings, and regular proselyte missions to as yet unconverted states were frequent. Monasteries brought with them early schools and hospitals, which helped bolster the image of the already enigmatic Sutzi and his populist teachings. Tenne used the monasteries to excerpt political influence, particularly in further afield territories, but this portion of monastic life was usually conducted behind closed doors and out of sight of the general population.



The most prestigious monasteries were formed under the 18 Great Apostles, the men and women who had joined Sutzi before his official recognition by Emperor Tenne. 7 of these monasteries were founded in the capital itself, and historically speaking, the succeeding abbots of these monasteries continued to form the core of the Inner Synod almost without exception. Leading up to Sutzi's death, the Greater Synod (then known simply as the Synod) had already begun its 9-yearly Ascensions, a meeting of all abbots and Sutzi to perform rituals, discuss doctrine and deal with any monastic or political issues.

6 years before the death of Sutzi, the bureaucratic officer Baoten ascended directly to the position of abbot at the powerful Nonnan monastery, replacing its founder, the Great Apostle Lartzi. Nonnan was perhaps the most profound producers of proselytes, and as such conducted extensive and increasingly dangerous missions in the north-western territories, where Sutzianism was frequently met with aggressive resistance from local warlords and tribal leaders. Baoten used his contacts in the bureaucracy to divert huge numbers of troupes, including over half the Imperial guard from the comparatively safe capital. Though apparently unaware of it at the time, this move to protect his clergy and interests in the north in part laid the foundation for the success of the military portion of the monastic coup some years later. Baoten's appropriation of Imperial troupes for monastic work set a precedent it was hard to revert, and Tenne's insistence that the military fight under monastic banners when they worked for the clergy would later work against the Imperial house. Despite its overbearing tenacity and occasional belligerence, the Sutzian movement was usually accepted as a force for good by the general population, bringing as it did education and early healthcare. The Empire under Tenne, on the other hand, seemed mostly to bring taxes and garrisoned troops.

After Sutzi's death in 74 AS*, a huge state funeral was held for him in the capital lasting, according to some sources, nearly one month. Tenne, by then a very old man, was stricken in bed, and despite the helplessness of his position many in both the laity and clergy saw his absence from proceedings as some kind of snub. That such a conclusion could be drawn by so many so easily gives credence to the notion that Sutzi and Tenne's relationship had soured somewhat by the end of Sutzi's life. Also, the popularity of the prophet by this point cannot be underestimated. Sutzi and his followers' perceived generosity was admired among a population more accustomed to the iron fist governance of Tenne and his court, and the slow creep of several years of below average harvest had begun to be felt as far as the capital by the time Sutzi's (nonetheless extravagant) funeral was held.

* Again, folklore and official records differ: popular thought has Sutzi die on his 109th birthday, but officially he lived into his 74th year.

Tenne died himself less than a year after Sutzi, leaving no clear heir to the Imperial throne. Ganzo, the only surviving son of Tenne's cousin, Tzuli Qen, was eventually deemed rightful heir, though not without considerable controversy. That the throne didn't go to Tzuli himself can only be explained by Tzuli's attitude towards the bureaucrats who were controlling the succession. In his own kingdom of Tsaotsao, Tzuli had staged an unrelenting campaign to roll back the ever encroaching powers of the bureaucrats and on more than one occasion he had outright denied officers access to his palace. Furthermore, Tzuli made no secret of the fact that he viewed the clergy with suspicion, and was one of the few Central Provinces' leaders who had never officially converted, in so much as that was possible in early Sutzianism. Ganzo was settled on as a good compromise between the legally more justifiable Tzuli and the more popular options, such as an apparently pious cousin of questionable legitimacy or Tenne's own, significantly younger sister. Ganzo was crowned three months after Tenne's death. No sooner had Ganzo taken the throne than Tzuli had installed himself in the capital as an advisor (a hereto unheard-of position in the Empire) and taken de facto control. Within months, Tzuli, through his son, had rolled back clergy privileges, further limited the right to alms, removed abbots from key positions in the capital and restored some of the smaller monasteries to their former use as military buildings. This last move in particular enraged the laity, since along with the loss of the monasteries came the loss of the schools and infirmaries they often housed.

Over the next several years, increasing unrest was met with increasingly harsh penalties, and even as living conditions worsened due to successive poor harvest, so Tzuli continued his roll back of monasteries. Perhaps feeling slighted in the succession decision, Tzuli also began cracking down on bureaucrats, transferring more power to warlords, kings, generals, and other favoured figures. Fighting with the gulf states had descended into bitter stalemate, causing a massive drain on Imperial armed forces, and without the stabilising force of the bureaucrats, northern territories found themselves, for better or worse, at the behest of their local ruler. In his misguided attempt to concentrate power into Imperial hands, Tzuli in fact managed to consolidate his internal enemies, and let the outer Imperial states return to partial independence.

In 81 AS, Abbot Baoten of Nonnan called a secret synod of 9 abbots he believed to be the most trustworthy, and though no official internal records exist, it is safe to assume a strategy was put in place to remove Tzuli and perhaps Ganzo from the Imperial palace. Whether it was decided at this point to do away with the imperial system all together is unclear. Whatever was discussed at the meeting, we can immediately see a more aggressive and secretive proselyte programme from all major monasteries and a greater focus on non-monastic, decentralised institutions. The development of House Meetings, formalisation of local festivals and dances, and the emergence of the Wandering Liu Monks all have their roots in this impressively productive period for the monastic body. Relationships with the shaman of the old religions also began turning, from frequently hostile, to a more mutual respect and clearer delineation of duties. Of course, with no centralised controlling force or set of beliefs, the old animists' opinions varied widely, but at least in key areas, attitudes seemed to warm. Even local kings and warlords — particularly northerners — could be swayed by a Sutzian-friendly shaman.

Baoten's proselyte missions were phenomenally successful in the otherwise isolationist gulf states, and a later myth that Baoten actually travelled to the gulf coast himself is fairly plausible, at least in comparison to other myths. Chief among Baoten's successes in the region was the conversion of the Matriarch of Essetum, the most powerful military city state along the southern coast. Without the support of Essetum ships, the decisive battle of the coup may have gone quite differently. This move to convert the gulf states was, however, the final straw for Tzuli. Aware of the popular support for the monastery, Tzuli refrained from outright denouncement of Baoten's Nonnan faction, but instead began a systematic confiscation of Nonnan monastic property, amounting to state endorsed looting. Official reasoning for the confiscations was to support the war effort in the south — with the very states Baoten was working to bring into Sutzianism — though where funds actually ended up, why specifically Nonnan monasteries were targeted, and what use soldiers would have for monastic paraphernalia was a mystery.

And so the stage was set for the coup. A war weary and famine plagued population living under an unpopular rule of questionable legitimacy, a military and bureaucracy with seriously divided loyalties, unsuccessful centralisation of power resulting in unpredictable outer states, and a

hugely popular alternative - i.e. the monasteries. All that was needed was a spark to set off the fire of revolution. The Hunger Riots in the capital would provide just such a catalyst.

In 86 AS, with public granaries all but empty, and the humanitarian work of the monasteries severely limited by the palace, a small conflict erupted between palace guards and group of locals. The men, hearing more or less truthful rumours that the imperial family was hoarding grain, tried to break into palace grounds. Autumn was drawing to a close and it was widely believed that public stores would not last another winter. Many of the men were killed, in a very public display of palace brutality. That night, crowds grew at the palace gate, some brandishing improvised weapons, demanding the Imperial stores be opened. Again, protests were met with force, and many were slaughtered, including women and children. In the following days tensions did not abate, and eventually Tzuli ordered armed Imperial Guards to take to the streets, effectively enforcing indefinite house arrest on as much of the city as they could control. Aggression spread to all quarters, and against Imperial will, urban monasteries began opening their doors to resistance fighters, providing asylum and medical assistance.

As violence grew in the capital, Baoten, at the time visiting at Tzeiton Monastery in what was still the southern portion of Queriu, began plotting in earnest against the despotic imperial house. Emissaries were sent out from Tzeiton and other monasteries, bureaucrats contacted even within the capital itself, and the large portions of Imperial Guard that remained loyal to the Sutzians since Tenne's time were amassed for full scale war. Tzuli, acutely aware of his precarious situation, chose at last to open the palace stores*. The move was, however, too little and too late. Angry fighters broke past the weakened guard and started ransacking the palace. Tzuli, Ganzo and select members of the imperial entourage fled the city by boat under cover of darkness, moving north in an apparent effort to get back to their home state of Tsaotsao. Imperial sympathisers and family who remained in the capital were quickly dispatched with by rioters. Children of the house hold, mostly those of Tzuli and Ganzo's concubines, were locked into their nursery room and torched alive, concubines themselves hanged and disembowelled, bureaucrats pulled apart by horses. The two day slaughter would be mythologised in the short and harrowing Red Path tale, and provided the spiritual impetus, or excuse, depending on ones point of view, to later move the capital. The Red Path massacre was quelled when Sutzian allied Imperial Guard arrived in the city and restored order. A local Abbot, and one of the few remaining Great Apostles, Toaden of Xigei declared amnesty for rioters and immediately began the systematic redistribution of imperial food to the population.

The Imperial family themselves landed prematurely at Kan Point in the Hape province just south of Tsaotsao, perhaps for lack of provisions, perhaps because of weather. Whatever the reason, it was deemed impractical to reach their home, and the family took up residence in the coastal castle of Notaa. Notaa and the surrounding lands were one of the many portions of Hape claimed under direct jurisdiction of Do of Kan, a senior member of the Hape royal family and long time Tzuli supporter. Seeing opportunity to improve his station, Do gave up the castle willingly, replete with it's stationed soldiers and whatever other resources could be mustered. Tzuli immediately set about planning his return to the capital, in what he saw as a counter attack to it's invasion by Sutzian traitors. He immediately announced all men and women in the grey habit of Sutzian clergy should be apprehended, and any citizen found to resist Imperial rule was traitorous and should be killed. Although the orders had their casualties, the truth of the matter is they only proved to display how deep anti-Imperialist sentiment ran, with the majority of people at least ignoring the edict and often directly contravening it when a monk or nun did come under attack.

The final major battle of the coup would occur with the storming of Notaa Castle, two months after Tzuli landed there. Smaller battles were fought in the interim and for some time after Tzuli's defeat, but these were largely inconsequential power grabs by smaller parties. Tzuli amassed the remainder of his guard in Hase, particularly concentrated near the castle, and supported by reinforcements from loyalists. Rebel forces, largely controlled by Baoten and others of the clergy, amassed at the Queriu and Hape border, as well as sailing up the east coast. Perhaps most significantly, Essetum ships were sailed up the Arun River as far as possible, hauled

* It should be noted that Imperial Grain stores were not housed in on palace grounds. Whether rioters were aware of this or not is unclear.

overland to the Mou River, and sailed back out onto the western coast, granting passage across the Isthmus of Oliish*. Essetum ships were developed for trade and coastal skirmishes, and as such were manoeuvrable and fast. With favourable tail winds it took them almost no time at all to reach the Notaa peninsula. The Gulf reinforcements arrived just as the rebel army reached Notaa castle and thus began the short lived siege. Tzuli was completely cornered, unable to escape across land for Baoten's men, and unable to flee by boat again because of the Essetum ships. On the third day of the siege, heavier Essetum ships specifically designed to take cities arrived, carrying on board siege weapons. Burning tar barrels launched directly into the castle caused many of the Imperial men to flee either directly into Baoten's forces, where they were taken as prisoners, or into the sea where they drowned or were shot dead by Essetum archers. By the end of the fifth day the castle was all but burnt out and Baoten's men, lead by General Nai, stormed the gates. They met little resistance, and found Tzuli dead and Ganzo severely burnt. He died some days later, though in an arguably calculated display of mercy was tended to till the last by Sutzian healers. Prisoners from the castle, both civilian and military, were shown a similar sort of mercy. A few men wilfully converted, and the exceptionally loyal committed suicide, but in what would become a regular tactic, Baoten enforced ordination on the majority of men, ostensibly making them noviciates, though in actuality reducing them to slave labour for senior monks. This practice would continue throughout the early period of the Sutzian federation as a means of dealing with resistance whilst maintaining an air of religious mercy.

With the Imperial family slain, the capital in ruins and the army almost entirely beholden unto the clergy, few dared challenge the new regime. Discussions of succession were quickly quelled by Baoten and his supporters, and shortly after cleaning up the remainder of Imperialist supporters, a Great Council was called. The Council was held at Tzeiton, for which it was later named, and included representatives of all major powers in the region, senior military and bureaucrats, and the Abbots of each of the 18 Houses of the Great Apostles and other minor monasteries. In all, 43 men and women were present in the main council, many with a retinue. The Sittings, as the meetings of the 43 came to be known, lasted 2 weeks, and the theory governance developed there would form the basis of what we shall discuss in the remainder of this document. Thus ended The Age of Suzti in 87 AS, some 13 years after his death. With the ordination of Baoten as the first Grand Abbot of the Federation of Sutzian Kingdoms a year later, the Age of Grand Abbots was begun.

* This is the assumed route. The only records of the feat describe either the earth parting and the ships sailing cleanly from the gulf to the ocean, or the ships ploughing through the earth itself.